

A HAPPY AMATEUR

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IF THERE is ever a happier Amateur Championship, James D. Standish, Jr., of Detroit, probably will have to put it on.

Jim climaxed a kaleidoscopic career in golf by giving all his friends one of the best times of their lives when they came to the Country Club of Detroit, in Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich., to determine the 1954 Amateur Champion.

This is the kind of a duty he loves to perform, and actually being host was not so hard for him as it might have been for others.

To work with, he had a vintage golf course, recently remolded by Robert Trent Jones to provide a wonderfully exacting test for the modern ball and clubs, and an active body of members who joined wholeheartedly in his project. He also had the special excitement which always attaches to the Amateur Championship in a year of Walker Cup Team determination.

During the playing phase of his career, Jim knocked out the defending champion, Francis Ouimet, and went to the quarter-finals the last time the Championship had been played at the Country Club of Detroit, in 1915. He also won the Austrian Amateur Championship during a college junket abroad. Thus he knew the players' viewpoint well.

Later and in logical sequence, Jim became a servant of the Detroit District Golf Association and of the United States Golf Association, and was President of the USGA in 1950 and 1951. Thus he knew the USGA viewpoint equally well.

These ingredients, mixed and seasoned, created another in the procession of outstanding Amateur Championships, and everyone had fun, which was just what Jim wanted.

No one, of course, had more fun than Arnold D. Palmer, of Cleveland, and, at least for a time, Robert Sweeny, of New York. Each levelled seven opponents, one by one as called, and met in a colorful, thrilling final which Palmer won, 1 up.

Fitting Climax

The final was so fitting as a climax that one might be forgiven for the suspicion that Jim Standish had engineered that, too, along with his other brilliant touches, such as the band that loosed a flood of appropriate, brassy notes from the terrace the moment Sweeny conceded the final tiny putt.

Palmer was at the time 24 and really just starting careers in golf and in selling. His father has been professional all his adult life at the Latrobe Country Club, in western Pennsylvania, and Arnold was brought up around the course. He attended Wake Forest College, served three years as an enlisted man in the Coast Guard and last year settled in Cleveland. He is a strong, dashing and courageous player who can make great shots when he has to and who also makes bad ones every once in a while.

Sweeny, on the other hand, is 43 and his golf career has been vastly underrated. He was born in California but was educated and lived for years in England and belongs to clubs not only in New York but also in London and Palm Beach. He was in the semi-finals of the British Amateur when Palmer was 5 years old. He won that Championship two years later, in 1937. During the war, the Sweeny family helped to organize the Eagle Squadron, composed of Americans who flew with the Royal Air Force before our entry into World War II, and he was a bomber pilot and squad-

ron commander, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross. He came out of the RAF and gained the final of the British Amateur again in 1946, in which year he also reached the quarter-finals of our Amateur. In spite of this record, few in the general golfing public fully appreciated his sound temperament and his consistent skill, particularly with wooden clubs.

It was a glamorous final between two brave match players, and it was also a model final between two real sportsmen.

For example, in the morning round they halved the first hole and then Sweeny made three successive birdies to go 3 up.

Champion



Arnold Palmer holds up the Amateur Championship Cup for all to see after his stirring victory at the Country Club of Detroit.

Going to the fifth tee, he threw his arm around Palmer's shoulder and murmured: "You can be sure of one thing. I can't go on like this much longer."

Their match was not squared, however, until the twenty-seventh hole. Palmer then forged two holes ahead with three to play and held on to win by a hole. He was two over par for the thirty-six holes, having scored 72 and 70 on the 6,875-yard, par-70 course.

Almost three months after the Championship, on November 17, Palmer decided to turn professional and sent the following words to the USGA:

"It is with mixed emotions that I advise you of my decision to turn professional. I

feel the deepest appreciation to all USGA officers for the fine relationship I have enjoyed. Yet, I can't overlook my life ambition to follow in the footsteps of my father. We both have counted on this since I first started playing golf fourteen years ago. My good fortune in competition this year indicates it is time to turn to my chosen profession."

The quarter of the draw from which Palmer emerged was the first and, in the opinion of many, the most heavily loaded. Palmer had to shoot a 70 in the very first round to get by Frank Strafacci, of New York, who made a 71 and lost by a hole. Palmer also made a 71 in his second match and escaped from John W. Veghte, of Gloversville, N.Y., with only a hole to spare.

Meanwhile, lower down in the same quarter, Harvie Ward, Jr., of San Francisco, the recently crowned Canadian Amateur Champion, was eliminating James W. Vickers, of Wichita, Kan., 2 and 1, and then bowing to Frank Stranahan, of Toledo, Ohio, 1 down. Palmer and Stranahan came together in the fifth round, and the match, a thriller, went to Palmer, 3 and 1. It turned out to be Stranahan's farewell to amateur competition; he turned professional a week later.

While they were battling it out, Don Cherry, of Wichita Falls, Texas, was idling as the beneficiary of a default by Jimmy McGonagill, of Shreveport, La., who awoke with a muscle ailment which prevented him from swinging a club. However, Palmer had enough left to eke his way past Cherry in the afternoon, 1 up.

Two from Cleveland

In the semi-finals, Palmer came up against Ed Meister, Jr., a fellow resident of Cleveland whose long career in golf has been as solid as it has been unspectacular. Although Meister was playing in his twelfth Amateur and never before had gone quite as far as the semi-finals, he gave Palmer a real battle that day. The lead changed hands seven times and the margin between them was as thin as tissue when Meister finally yielded to a tree guarding the green at the third extra hole.

Meanwhile, Sweeny was playing steadier, six-over-par golf in eliminating Dr. Ted N. Lenczyk, of Hartford, Conn., 5 and 4. Dr. Lenczyk had gained fame earlier as the brother and golfing tutor of Miss Grace Lenczyk, the 1948 Women's Amateur Champion.

All four of these men were appearing in the semi-finals for the first time.

The carousel which amateur golf has become seldom has been so clearly revealed as in one statistic: The last players to make repeat appearances in the semi-finals were Charles R. Coe, of Oklahoma City, and William P. Turnesa, of New York. Both were semi-finalists in 1948, when Turnesa won, and in 1949, when Coe won. Since 1949, we have had four new semi-finalists every year.

Gallery Follows Patton

For the first time in the Amateur, all fairways were roped off and galleries were kept behind the ropes. The device had, however, been used successfully in the Open, earlier in the season.

Primarily, the ropes were required for Billy Joe Patton of Morganton, N. C., who was the golden boy of the galleries before the Championship started and during its early rounds. He had shot into prominence this year by the light-hearted manner in which he took the amateur prizes in the Masters Tournament and the Open Championship.

Patton more than lived up to his reputation by coming repeatedly from the rough and woods to hole long putts and eventually break the heart of young Rex Baxter, Jr., of Amarillo, Texas, at the nineteenth hole. Patton hit scarcely a green with the proper shot but he one-putted ten of them to keep himself even with par and in the match. Patton also went out in 34 to beat Tim Holland, of New York, 4 and 3, in the second round, but he lost his touch there and went down the next day before Donald Doe, a member of the Canadian Americas Cup Team.

Although there was a feeling that the members of The Americas Cup Team had been over-golfed by their play in the Cup Match, the Canadian Amateur and the USGA Amateur in successive weeks, actually they made the best showing any Cup Team has made in years.

Coe went out in the first round, Joseph W. Conrad, of San Antonio, Texas, fell in the second, Patton and Ward bowed in the third and William C. Campbell, of Huntington, W. Va., joined them in the fifth.

But it took Palmer and Sweeny to stop Cherry and Dale Morey, of Indianapolis, Ind., in the quarter-finals. It has been painfully rare in recent years for more than one Cup player to advance that far in the Championship following the Match.

The Long Driver

There wasn't a former Champion remaining after the second round. Ted Bishop, Charles Coe, Charles Evans, Jr., and Sam Urzetta all were beaten in the first round. Turnesa was favored with a bye but joined the others after the second round, where he lost to Dave Smith, Jr., of Gastonia, N. C. Incidentally, Smith's long driving made him an almost legendary figure in the three rounds he lasted. For example, his drive on the level 365-yard first hole one morning stopped seven yards short of the green and yet, by his standards, was good but no particular freak.

Foster Bradley, Jr., the new Junior Amateur Champion, got into the third round; but Gene Andrews, the new Amateur Public Links Champion, lost his first match.

The elite who made the round of sixteen, in the order of the draw, were: Palmer and Stranahan; McGonagill and Cherry; Meister and Glen H. Johnson, of Detroit; Campbell and Edward P. Martin, of Winchester, Mass.; Davis M. Love, of El Dorado, Ark., and Wilson F. Barnes, Jr., of Chappaqua, N.Y.; John D. Culp, Jr., of Kendallville, Ind., and Lenczyk; Morey and Ray Taylor, of Greensboro, N.C.; Eddie Merrins, of Meridian, Miss., and Sweeny.